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# A Third Reason to Home School: Leadership Development

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**Abstract**

This article responds to Poutiatine's (2009) *What is Transformational?: Nine Principles Toward an Understanding Transformational Process for Transformational Leadership* by relating home schooling environments as lab schools for developing transformational leaders. Although many families select home schooling for improved academic progress or structured moral development, this article poses a new motivation: the development of leadership within children. Examples of all Poutiatine's (2009) nine principles from previously published research demonstrate that leadership development occurs in the home education setting.

**Keywords**: leadership development, homeschooling.

MANY IN THE home school community select home schooling for increased academic achievement or positive moral values education (Mackey, Reese, & Mackey, 2011). However, educational researchers may cite a third reason for selecting home schooling: leadership development. Leadership research, noting the benefit of socio-emotional development in education, included those who are involved in the home education community (Kingston & Medlin, 2006). Since the 1960s, prolific writers such as Bass (1960), Bennis (1974), and Burns (1978), have written theory and practice on the subject of leadership. Developing strategies for new styles of educational and business management, these leadership theorists wrote boldly on corroboration and community building within an organization. A wave of management training revived industry (Burns, 1978) and educational bureaucracies (Bennis, 1974) which formerly operated with top-down managerial leadership. Downton (1973) devised the term "transformational leadership" to include how leaders lead themselves, others, and their organizations through a process of transformation. Transformational change is a deeper and more sustainable restructuring than mere change (Burns, 2003a; Poutiatine, 2009). Burns (2003a), unlike Bass (1990), viewed transformational leadership as elevating followers to a higher order of values and morals; while Bass viewed leadership as amoral--similar to the laws of gravity-- relating only to the cause and effects of human nature and behavior.

Transformation includes the altering of structure or composition, character, or condition (Merriam-Webster, 2011). Burns (1978) described transformational leadership, not as a set of specific behaviors, but rather an ongoing process by which "leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation" (p. 20). Transformational leaders offer a purpose that transcended short-term goals and focused on higher order intrinsic needs (Report, 2007). Mezirow and Associates (2000) state that transformational leadership required leaders to engage with superiors, subordinates, and peers on many levels. This strenuous engagement required an investment of time and attention, demanding a commitment from those who promote transformational leadership in their environment (Burns, 2003b). Just as moral development occurred in a ubiquitous manner, transformational leadership development occurs both as intentional leadership directives and unintentional acts of home, school, and church life each day. Kohlberg (1975) explained that stages of moral development evolved through exposure to experiences which caused the child to think and engage in moral dilemmas. This development took place through maturation, mentoring, learning, and contemplating life.

Likewise, new stages in leadership development reflect these broader viewpoints and experiences toward transformational leadership development. Development of this nature takes time. Home schooling families enjoy a larger amount of time and influence with their children than those who send their children to traditional schools. With a greater number of hours, home schooling parents have the potential to participate in and enter into deeper levels of engagement (Schultz, 1998). Additionally, the home school environment acts as a perfect leadership-learning laboratory as boys and girls observe adults accomplishing long-term goals and working through daily tasks. Montgomery (1989) concluded her research study on the effects of home schooling by stating that "it would appear that home schooling is not generally repressive of a student's potential leadership, and may in fact, nurture leadership at least as well as does the conventional system" (p. 7).

## Nine Principles of Transformational Leadership

CHILDREN LEARN LEADERSHIP just as they learn reading, writing, and math skills. Leadership is taught. Leadership development can also be observed and measured. Methods which are found more effective in leadership development can be replicated (Parks, 2005). Patterns of leadership development can be observed in the home school environment. Poutiatine (2009) developed nine principles of transformational leadership with the goal of "developing a clear understanding of transformation and the transformational process" (p. 192). These principles are not prescriptive, but allow educators and researchers to consider how educational environments, methods, and pedagogies enhance the process of transformational leadership development. This article reviews previously validated home schooling studies to reveal that home schooling families exhibit each of Pountiatine's (2009) nine principles. Observation in the home school setting revealed transformational leadership as documented through these previously published articles, which are described in Poutiatine's (2009) nine principles of transformational leadership. These principles are:

> Transformation is not synonymous with change.
> Transformation requires assent to change.
> Transformation always requires second-order change.
> Transformation always involves all aspects of an individual's or organization's life.
> Transformational change is irreversible.
> Transformational change involves a letting go of the myth of control.
> Transformational change involves some aspect of risk, fear, and loss.
> Transformational change always involves a broadening scope of worldview.
> Transformation is always a movement toward a greater integrity of identity--a movement toward wholeness. (p. 190)

Examples of parents and their students demonstrating these principles provide insight into the process of leadership development. Valid studies reveal home schooling parents and their children manifested these principles in the home school environment. These nine principles categorize the areas in which home school families perform as transformational leaders.

### Principle One: Transformation Is Not Synonymous with Change

Deciding to home school transfigures the home of the family. Home schooling was more than a change in educational environments and methods. The decision to home school transformed the whole life of the home educating student and parents. Although some educators defined change as a temporary altering of behavior, circumstance, or location, transformation means more. Transformation reflected a multi-level, multi-faceted shift (Bennis, 2003). An example of change might include the motivation a student has to raise a grade from a 'B' to an 'A' in a certain subject. The student's change of study habits for the course and subsequent higher grade would be viewed as a positive change. However, if the student determined to make financial, social, and academic sacrifices to learn this subject, the outcome would signal more than change. The latter example represents the home educator. For instance, if in home education, the student who had previously little knowledge or concern for a subject became motivated to begin a study, and at the same time recruited other students to endeavor the study with him, traveled to increase study, organized an association for the furthering of the study, and purchased resources for the study, this would be considered transformational. These practices characterize the activities in which new home school families engage (Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009; Reynolds & Williams, 1985). Investments of time, energy, and money exhibit transformational change and effort on the part of home schooling families. Additionally, home schooling marked the change in the daily schedule of the entire family, as well as the school schedule for the children in the family. Therefore, the decision to home school is indeed interpreted as transformational.

Studies point to the academic excellence of previously low performing students who function better through home schooling efforts (Basham, Merrifield, & Hepburn, 2007). Home schooling parents go farther than merely a commitment to academics in their family. Instead of merely pursuing better grades for their home schooled children, parents traditionally attempted mastery learning in their home -- the practice of teaching a subject until the student can score 80% or better on ability testing -- before moving on to the next lesson (Brannier, 2007).

Equally as important, home school studies showed that home schoolers possess significantly higher self-esteem than those in public schools (Taylor, 1986), enjoy less peer dependence than privately schooled students (Delahooke, 1986), and participated in extra-curricular activities which promote leadership (Montgomery, 1989). This multifaceted shift in a student's life goes beyond a mere change of venue and pedagogy. The process of home schooling transforms the life of the child. Home educating families do not enter into this form of education and lifestyle by chance; they assent to the change.

### Principle Two: Transformation Requires Assent to Change

Home schooling parents voluntarily agree to home educate their own children, unlike those who aid in their child's education at night doing homework because they are required to do so through compulsory attendance laws. The very act of removing a child from a structured traditional school system -- and organizing and managing a home learning environment -- provides verification that the home schooling parent actively agrees to this change. Reynolds and Williams (1985) provided a vivid example through a case study of how home school families accept that their entire lives will be lives of transition and change when they begin home educating. Through different seasons of the children's education, home educating families adapt their daily operational schedule, as well as their long-term plans, to accommodate for a quality education for their children.

Van Pelt, Neyen, and Allison (2009) reported that when home schooled graduates began a family of their own, they decided to home school their own children in 7 out of 10 cases. When 70% of formerly home schooled students determined to home school their own children, this statistic is significant. This large number of second generation home educators implies that not only did the parents of these students assent to the pedagogical work of education, but that those parents taught their children in a way which motivated those children to desire this opportunity for their own children.

**Principle Three: Transformation Always Requires Second-Order Change**

Second order change in leadership literature is defined as "deciding to do something significantly or fundamentally different from what we have done before. The process is irreversible: once you begin, it is impossible to return to the way you were doing before" (Change, 2011). With the change in lifestyle and second-order change, many families who began home schooling for one reason continue home schooling for an entirely different reason, such as the realization that the family functions better in this method of organization (Nemer, 2002). Families often remarked that they saw positive changes in their children's personality after only a short time in the home school environment. Home schooled children scored higher on "tests of empathy and altruism, and use higher levels of moral reasoning than public school children" (Kingston & Medlin, 2006, p.1). These social-emotional developments transpired through increased time with parents, focused attention, and guidance in handling moral situations and dilemmas (Kohlberg, 1975). Although children can be taught to share through behavioral rewards, altruism and empathy exemplify second-order change: a change in the will and motivation of the child. Those parents new to home schooling reported adjustment in the daily schedule of home life -- cooking, cleaning, taking care of younger children -- while adding the burden of educating children (Fields-Smith & Williams, 2009). However, this change in daily life forced many parents to expect older children to periodically become tutors and care-givers to younger siblings (Montgomery, 1989). Bass (1960), related that individuals reproduce their primary family experiences in other groups to which they belong. Therefore, Bass (1960) supposed that future leaders (ignoring situational considerations) come from homes where they were given opportunities to practice problem-solving, particularly interaction problem-solving; from homes where they have been stimulated and not left to their own devices; from homes where they have been treated as functional of their level of maturity rather than babied or pushed too rapidly; from organized harmonious homes emphasizing positive incentives. (p. 198)

Likewise, adults who were once content to follow the dictums of public school life find themselves transformed through home schooling and become mentors of new home schooling parents. Home education support groups become the basis of training and support in most communities. Veteran home educators take active roles in these support groups to initiate and educate new families into the daily routines of home education (Cappello, Mullarney, & Cordeiro,1995).

**Principle Four: Transformation Always Involves All Aspects of an Individual's or Organization's Life**

When home schooling parents undertake home education to improve their children's academic performance, the parents are prepared to observe change in academic performance (Montgomery, 1989). However, many were unaware and unprepared for the difference they observed in their children's socio-emotional development. Professional educational interviewers reported that home schooled students converse with adults with more ease and poise on both serious and trivial matters than their public school counterparts (Meighan, 2009). Home educated students appeared to be as mature and less peer-dependent than public schooled students of the same age (Delahooke, 1986). Home schooling involved the social aspect of a participant's life. Home schooled students exhibited a higher self-concept than that of conventionally schooled children (Taylor, 1986). These students participated in social activities (Delahooke, 1986), community services projects, (Montgomery, 1989) and become socially competent adults (Webb, 2009). Just as parents who removed their children from traditional schooling for academic reasons and found more social benefits of home education, likewise the parents who removed their children from school to alleviate bullying and other social maladies, continued to discover the academic transformational results (Beck, 2008). Home schooling families reported that the experience strengthened their family lives and allowed for more flexibility and creativity in their daily schedules. School life became family life and vice versa. This transforming environment allowed teenagers to reassess their priorities. Case studies showed that teenagers preferred to go to the movies with their parents and siblings rather than with friends they previously held dear (Cappello et al., 1995).

Home school graduates reported that their training prepared them for adjusting to college, where they made good grades, and found themselves as well prepared as many of their fellows at university (Van Pelt et al., 2009). Transformational leadership will not only enlighten participants to their environments and those around them, it will also add value to the communication and environment (Burns, 2003b). The home schooling graduate who attended college revealed this enlightenment. Often home schooled graduates, now college students, report their enlightened reaction to the amount of profanity spoken as an acceptable expression in the college environment. Being removed from this culturally acceptable practice in the teen culture, these home schooled graduates could not describe themselves as "numb to the constant bad language and actions that go against [their] ideals" (Meighan, 2009, p. 6). Home schooling provided transformation in the areas of rigorous academics, enriching conversation, mature behavior, and appropriate adult language.

**Principle Five: Transformational Change is Irreversible**

Change occurred in families who home schooled. Once a family began to home school in earnest, the change was irreversible. The number of parents who chose to remove their children from public school, began home schooling, and later

returned their children to public school would be hard to determine. However, even if parents returned to traditional schooling, the family dynamic which materialized is irreversible because of the experience of attempting a culture changing activity (Burns, 2003b). Parents engaged in home schooling relate that their children have become better social agents without constant peer dependence (McDowell, 2004). McDowell's (2004) meta-analysis of studies on socialization of home educators corroborates what many home school parents believe: Home schooling became an irreversibly positive experience for families. Home schooling enriched a person's life. Home schooled graduates reported that home schooling enriched their adult lives by teaching them to be self-motivated and self-disciplined (Van Pelt et al., 2009). Relational and transformational leadership theories demonstrate the powerful impact a transformational leader produced in the future of one or more students (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011). For home schooled children, the impact of a leader may increase because of the extended time and emotional attachment to the person with whom the child emulates (Kingston & Medlin, 2006).

**Principle Six: Transformational Change Involves a Letting Go of the Myth of Control**

Parents who home schooled soon realized how little they actually controlled the development of their own children. Just as children do not walk or talk at the same age, parents became aware that they cannot manipulate all circumstances to force their children to learn to read, write, or acquire mathematic skills at the same rate (Moore, 1994).

Believing that a level of control is needed regarding home schooled students, some state governments attempt to set some regulations on home schooling families (Kunzman, 2009). However, studies concerning these regulations show that they do nothing to improve the quality of education. Slatter (2009), speaking on behalf of Rudner (1999), reported that home schooled students in states with high state regulation (requiring parents to send notification or achievement test scores and/or professional evaluation, plus other requirements) scored at the 87 percentile on nationally normed tests. This statistic was replicated in students who also scored at the 87% percentile who were home schooled in states with low state regulation: those with no state requirements for parents to initiate any contact, or state notification only (Slatter, 2009). These statistics show that imposed control over home schooling families does not produce the desired result of better educated children. It is a myth that this control is needed. Parents, too, often feared that they may not be adequate to educate their own children (Kunzman, 2009). However, in an environment such as home schooling, which is fostering transformational change, participants released the need to manipulate all situations.

Releasing the need for a control over curriculum allowed home schooled students to create projects, explore outdoor environments, and conduct science experiments at their own paces (Taylor, 2012). Although these transformational changes were positive, the uncontrolled and unknown may create fear or feelings of loss.

**Principle Seven: Transformational Change Involves Some Aspect of Risk, Fear, and Loss**

Through case study interviews, home educating parents expressed that their decision to home school elicited a feeling of fear of litigation. Even in less restrictive states, parents used caution needed in allowing neighbors and community members to know they were home educating (Cappello et al., 1995). Likewise, mothers in a case study examining the experiences of Black families reported that these home schooling mothers feared rebuke from the Black community. Often seen as a "sell-out" by other Black mothers, home schooling Black families feared being ostracized by their family and friends (Field-Smith & Williams, 2009, p. 386). Field-Smith and Williams (2009) explained the risk one mother knew she was taking in deciding to home school: She could continue to "sacrifice the education of her children for the good of the community public school system" or sacrifice her friendships (p. 387). Loss of position and friendships frightened many who had begun home schooling.

Home schoolers expressed fear of interaction between local school authorities and themselves. Although some states and school districts communicate that they wanted to extend assistance to the local home schooling community, the home schooling families fear the "us and them mentality" (Beck, 2008, p. 67). Beck (2008) noted that families expressed fear that if they asked for testing and assistance in educating for their children while home schooling, they would be used as "scapegoats" if they were not successful at home schooling (p. 67). These considerations constitute a new and broadened approach to daily life: a broadened worldview.

**Principle Eight: Transformational Change Always Involves a Broadening Scope of Worldview**

Comenius (1633) advised parents to teach their own children in the free and natural environment of home. Although families accepted this type of nonstructured education in the 17th century, many educators today war against the idea of a liberating education. When parents endeavor a free and more natural form of education, a return to the previous structured environment feels, as Comenius (1633) would state, "unnatural" (p. 43). The traditionally structured environment requires a huge effort and cost to obtain what an educational environment in a relaxed setting could have produced more naturally (Bruner, 1990). Often, educational theorists who sought to liberate educators recommended a freer and more natural education, but this becomes possible only in an unstructured environment (Gutek, 2005). By liberating their ideas about education, home schooling families became more open to other liberating worldviews as well. "Parents who choose to home school their children view themselves as diverging from mainstream society. They consider their values and beliefs to be incompatible with standard methods of schooling.... Further, many home schoolers provide powerful critiques of American schooling" (Nemer, 2002, p.16).

Michael Apple (2000) viewed home schooling as a key element in the populist, neo-liberal, and neo-conservative movements active in American politics today. As parents

became active in educating their children, they also become more critical in their own studies (Reynolds & Williams, 1985). In the United States, many researchers associate home schooling with the conservative Christian movement. In the United States, 40% of home educators cited religious or moral convictions as their key motivating factors for home schooling (Bauman, 2002). However, in the United Kingdom, only 4 to 5% of home educators responded that they home schooled for religious reasons (Beck, 2008). Beck (2008) reported that many parents wanted to spend more time with their own children. After a few years, home schooling families became comfortable with a more self-determined life style and often broadened their political and social views. These new views included an identity oriented philosophy of education (Beck, 2010). Home schooling parents placed a high value on teaching their children values, religious beliefs, and character training (Kingston & Medlin, 2006). Development of a new world view signified a transformation in the individual or organization which can be associated with greater integrity of identity (Mezirow & Associates, 2000). Furthermore, as children grew in a home schooling environment, parents challenged children to determine and communicate their own worldview (Schultz, 1998). Whether for religious, political, or social motivations, home educators nurtured leadership potential through a broadened worldview (Montgomery, 1989; Spitzberg, 1987)

**Principle Nine: Transformation: Movement To a Greater Integrity of Identity—Wholeness**

Self-efficacy and independence have long been viewed as instrumental elements in leadership development among the young (Bandura, 1977). Although most home schooling families in the United States identify themselves as Christian, home educating liberates minds of every persuasion to seek self-efficacy and identity. Bertrand Russell (1950), atheist and distinguished philosopher, stated, "I was glad I did not go to school. I would have had no time for original thoughts, which has been my chief stay and support in troubles." Motivation for home schooling for many parents included more time for their children to pursue individual interests (Beck, 2010). Moreover, parents report that the teaching of their own children motivated parents to become life-long learners themselves (DeMille & DeMille, 2008). Desiring to learn more while educating their children demonstrated how home schooling transformed the homes and lives of the parent, as well as the student, in home education. In case studies families related how the experience of home schooling had strengthened their entire family and allowed for more creativity and flexibility in their daily life (Cappello et al.,1995).

When parents allowed freedom in education, children moved toward their own identity and self-expression. This move toward self-expression fostered transformational leadership. Upon returning to a public school, one home schooler stated, "I had to learn the system and jump through the hoops, and as a homeschooler and a free spirit who used my own standards and work and study habits --it was difficult" (Meighan, 2010, p. 5). Van Pelt et al., (2009) reported that home schooling students described the most positive aspects of being home schooled as the rich relationships and individualization of pace and programs. These families characterized home schooling as a superior education and superior lifestyle compared to traditional schooling.

**Conclusion**

BEING AUTHENTIC OR genuine qualified as a primary characteristic in transformational leadership (Report, 2007). Through home schooling, families experienced authentic transformation (including restructuring of every area of the family's life), second order, and irreversible change. This alteration expanded and broadened the worldview of the family, even though the family may have experienced a sense of fear or loss of friends and the painful letting go of the myth of control. Poutiatine (2009) developed principles for identifying transformational leadership in a learning process. These principles have all been observed in home schooling studies throughout the world.

Isabel Lyman (1998) pithily described the American home schooling experience: "Home schooling has produced literate students with minimal government interference at a fraction of the cost of any government program"(p.16). Smedley (1992) found in his research that home educated children were significantly better socialized and more mature than those in public school. Gatto (1992) stated that an education should make a person a more unique individual, not a conformist; it should furnish a person with such gifts as an "original spirit with which to tackle big challenges . . . values . . . and a spiritual richness" (p. 75). Home education provides this type of transforming education. Bennis (2003) concluded that leadership can be learned by everyone. Home schooling offers direct instruction with a rich and fruitful education for the individual (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011), an opportunity for learning delegation of responsibility (Bass, 1960), and experiences of intimate family connections (McDowell, 2004). The home school exemplifies a nurturing environment for transformational leadership.

**Need for Further Study**

ALTHOUGH THE LITERATURE from the past 30 years demonstrates that transformational leadership and transformational learning have been part of the home schooling experience, there remains a need for current studies. Qualitative studies in which the researcher observes the transformational leadership behaviors of children and their parents in the home schooling environment could provide rich descriptions of the experiences. "The unheard voices of the students and their parents" would add to the body of literature on the process of transformational leadership in specific groups of people, and how these groups interact with the greater community (Schalkwyk & Bouwer, 2011, p. 186). Parents could provide dense narrative accounts of the routines and rituals which might facilitate the growth of transformational leadership.

Additionally, quantitative studies comparing the transformational leadership behaviors between adults who were home schooled to those who had attended a traditional public

school could validate which environment better produced leadership skills such as entrepreneurship, conflict management, and problem solving (Burns, 2003a). Subsequent studies comparing leadership skills of students in middle school and high school would prove invaluable to school administrators, teachers, and university teacher educators. Current growth would estimate seven million home school graduates in the United States by the year 2020 (Zeiss, 2011). This mass of home schooled Americans must alert educational and industrial leaders to both the strengths and the needs of this growing population. Educational researchers should focus their attention not only on the academic achievement of this group, but also on their social skills and leadership potential.

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